

CHILDREN LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND THE BOOK INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA: THE EFA 2015 POLICY SOMERSAULT

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the linkage between Nigeria's anticipated failure in the Education for All (EFA) 2015 goals and her policy implementation strategies in relation to her literacy industry and socio-demographics. The assessment is premised on the increasing concern for universal literacy, which grew out of the 1990 World Education Conference in Jomtien and the 2000 Dakar World Education Forum. The principal aim is to locate valid evidences that may confirm and explain the expected failure. By way of review and situation analysis, the paper looks at key intervention strategies of the Nigerian government under the Universal Basic Education UBE (formerly Universal Primary Education—UPE) and Nomadic Education policies. The paper then discusses the interface between the literacy industry and literacy policy implementation, where evidences of disconnection between the two is established and brought to bearing with Nigeria's failure in the 2015 EFA targets. The paper goes further to juxtapose literacy policy implementation with major socio-demographic facts in Nigeria, where additional evidences revealing large scale disagreement between 2015 EFA goals and basic socio-demographic influences in Nigeria are found in support of the thesis of this paper that Nigeria will indeed fail to deliver the 2015 EFA targets, and that the failure is significantly consequent upon poor policy implementation strategy arising from (1) strategic disconnection between her literacy industry and literacy policy implementation and (2) Unsettled socio-demographic influences. Some measures are recommended to reinvigorate Nigeria in the global drive towards EFA beyond 2015.

Keywords: *Literacy industry, literacy policy, socio-demographics, education-for-all, universal basic education*

INTRODUCTION

As the world anticipates the mid-21st century, with the United Nations' Literacy Decade (2003-2012) fading out fast, it is most appropriate now to check progress in

global literacy development. This is particularly important because it was noted five years ago that universal literacy had remained a major challenge for both developing and developed countries in terms of commitment and action (UNESCO 2004: 5). Statistics from less developed countries of Africa has continued to reveal exponential growth in human populations. This growth has been quite disproportionate with progress in literacy development in the region. Already from Sub-Saharan Africa, the Nigerian government has announced that it may not be able to meet the 2015 Education for All (EFA) goals (Gulloma & Onochie 2010).

Like the lingering polio vaccination controversy in northern Nigeria, the crippling effect of which has made it difficult for the world to meet the disease eradication targets, Nigeria's inability to meet the 2015 EFA goals is an enormous setback on global literacy development efforts, particularly because the country holds more than 14 percent of an estimated one billion human populations in Africa.

Broadly speaking, the question that follows is why might Nigeria not meet the goals of Education for All in 2015? There are indeed many ways to explain this failure. The objective of this paper is to examine the linkage between Nigeria's anticipated failure and her policy implementation strategies, specifically in relation to her literacy industry (Book publishing and Education sectors) and socio-demographics. The aim is to confirm the failure and establish valid explanatory factors.

It is the thesis of this paper that Nigeria will fail in the 2015 EFA children literacy development targets, and that the failure is significantly consequent upon poor policy implementation strategy, arising from (1) Strategic disconnection between the literacy industry and literacy policy implementation and (2) Unsettled socio-demographic influences. In presenting this position, the paper reviews the country's literacy profile, and examines the various intervention strategies of the government under the Universal Primary Education (UPE); the Universal Basic Education (UBE) and Nomadic Education. The paper then zeroed in on the interface between the literacy industry and literacy policy implementation, where evidences of disconnection between the two was established and brought to bearing with Nigeria's failure in global literacy development. The paper went further to juxtapose literacy policy implementation with major socio-demographic facts in Nigeria. Here again, evidences of large scale disagreement between EFA 2015 goals and Nigeria's socio-demographic influences were found in support of the thesis of this paper

NIGERIA'S LITERACY PROFILE

With a population standing at 140,003,542 (2006 Census); 154,729,000 million people (2009 estimate), Nigeria remains the most populous black nation on earth, occupying more than 14 percent of an estimated one billion human population in Africa, and the 8th most populated country in the world. The evolution of Nigeria from the mid-1800s until it attained independence in 1960 is largely the story of the transformation impact of the British (Aderinoye 2007). Thus, "Western" education and literacy was introduced to the country by the British. There is also Quranic literacy and education system, which came into the country earlier with the advent of Islam in the 13th century, and was spread through Usman Dan-Fodio-led Jihad during the first quarter of the 19th century. However, due to the preponderance of British colonial influence, national emphasis has been on western education since

independence. Therefore, literacy is discussed in this paper within the context of western education.

Literacy development in Nigeria is guided by the broad national objective, clearly spelt out in the Second National Development Plan 1970-1974, and endorsed as foundation for the national policy on education: "To build a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation and dynamic economy and a land of bright and full opportunity for all citizens". As a member of the international community and a signatory to the United Nations, Nigeria is also bound by international conventions and declarations on education and literacy, making the country accountable to the world in universal literacy development.

The 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2009) puts the literacy rate of 15–24 year old at 69.4 percent overall. Of this, Female occupies 64.3 percent, while Male occupies 82.5 percent. This suggests an improvement on the 2005 profile, which put national literacy rate at 57 percent (NPC 2005: 34). The 2005 figure was a downward fluctuation from that of 2003, which puts the literate population of Nigeria at 68 percent, out of which male constitute 75.7 percent, and female 60.6 percent (CIA 2010). Before this time, the country had witnessed steady deterioration in literacy development, as captured in the 2005 report of the Millennium Development Goal in Nigeria:

Literacy level in the country has steadily and gradually deteriorated, especially within the 15-24 years group. By 1999, the overall literacy rate had declined to 64.1% from 71.9% in 1991. The trend was in the same direction for Male and Female members of the 15-24 years age bracket. Among the Male, the rate declined from 81.35% in 1991 to 69.8% in 1999. The decline among the Female was from 62.49% to 59.3% during the same period (NPC 2005: 14).

No meaningful discussion of progress in children literacy development can occur without looking at children's enrolment in schools. There is absolute interdependence between the two. According to reports from the Federal Ministry of Education (FME/UBE and NBS 2007), a total of 19.2 million primary school pupils were enrolled in 2001. This figure rose to 19.8 million in 2002 and 25.7 million in 2003. Although the report revealed disparity between male and female in the formation of this enrolment, it failed to disclose the proportion of the enrolment to the actual figure of school age children who were expected to have enrolled at that period. However, a recent report submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women by the Federal Government says, "contrary to the data from previous years, primary school education enrolment between 2004 and 2006 among female children showed a downward trend from 80 to 60.4 percent (a decrease of 19.6 percent) of the total number of girls that are within the age of enrolment" (Punch 2008).

The trend, the report further reveals, was similar to that of boys which dropped from 80 percent to 64 percent (a decrease of 16 percent) within the same period. The report also indicates that the same fate befell the secondary school level in 2004 as enrolment dropped from 83.4 percent to 46 percent among female students. Again in May 2008, UNICEF reported that approximately 10 million school age children

(primary and secondary) are out of school in Nigeria. Of these, 4.7 million are of primary school age, while 5.3 million are of secondary school age and 62 percent of children out of school are girls (see Punch 2008). It is important to note that there has not been any significant change in this trend.

Policy Interventions in Children Literacy Development

To demonstrate how fundamental literacy is to human development, the United Nations' Literacy Decade came under the motto "Literacy as Freedom", knowing that Freedom, well defined, is a universal right. The importance of literacy in human development underscores the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), whose article 1:1 and article 3:1 clearly provide that every person—child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic needs; and that basic education should be provided to all children, youths and adults (www.mopme.gov.bd). Nigeria is a signatory to these resolutions and those of the Dakar World Education Forum that followed on 26–28 April 2000 (unesdoc.unesco.org), where new set of EFA goals were set to be attained in 2015. Specifically on children, these goals include:

- Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- Ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstances and from ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

As if these meetings were not enough, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium development declaration allocated two of its eight goals to education, one of which is goal 2: To achieve universal primary education (Igbuzor 2006: 2).

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The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is the on-going children literacy policy in Nigeria, which grew out of the Jomtien conference. The policy was introduced in Nigeria on 30 September 1999, in line with global convention of providing universal, free and compulsory basic education for all citizens. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) is the institutional framework for the implementation of UBE in Nigeria. It is noteworthy that the Universal Basic Education stresses the inclusion of girl child and women and a number of underserved groups: the poor, street and working children, rural and remote populations, nomads, migrant workers, indigenous people, minorities, refugees and the disabled (Unagha 2008: 1–2). The government had equally introduced Nomadic Education under the institutional care of Nomadic Education Commission to implement mobile literacy for the Nomadic Fulbe (Cattle readers), who originates largely from northern part of the country and the nomadic fishermen found mainly in southern part of the country. In both programmes, the government has continued to implement different intervention projects of money disbursement (VON 2010), procurement and supply of books to

schools and specialised institutions, construction and renovation of classroom blocks including provision of other literacy consumable. This benevolent procurement and disbursement of money and literacy consumable, including books equally characterised the Universal Primary Education programme (UPE) in Nigeria in the 1970s, which eventually failed due to corrupt handling (Dike 2002: 1).

It is noteworthy that these disbursements only go to public schools, which lacks qualified and/or committed teachers. The basic role of the book sector (Publishers) in the Universal Primary Education scheme occurs in two dimensions. One is that the Publishers are requested to commission qualified local authors to write on relevant subjects, which it publishes on contract basis. The government then procures and distributes the books to schools and other beneficiaries. Another is direct adoption of foreign books or relevant local book by the government, which a publisher is requested to modify and publish. In both cases there are great chances for lobbying by authors and publishers, and decisions are usually not free of political considerations that often disagree with quality.

This pattern is not radically different from what obtains under the current Universal Basic Education, which is even worsened by the large scale unofficial opportunity it provides for local politicians and public office holders to participate in contractual procurement and supply of literacy materials to educational institutions. Publishers are still treated as contractors and business partners to the government. There are no strategic efforts to integrate or absorb the book industry into literacy policy planning and implementation as evident in the (1) increasingly high costs of publishing, (2) lack of tax incentives to the book industry and (3) lack of functional book policy. A little light on these evidences might help further understanding of the argument here.

EVIDENCES OF DISCONNECTION BETWEEN LITERACY INDUSTRY AND LITERACY POLICIES

1. High Publishing Costs

The contradiction between increasingly high cost of publishing books in Nigeria and the government's desire to achieve the 2015 children literacy development goals is a clear indication of policy somersault. This is evident in the absence of linkage between the book industry and basic education policy implementation. The following model attempts to capture the nature of the role assigned to the book industry in the implementation of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria.

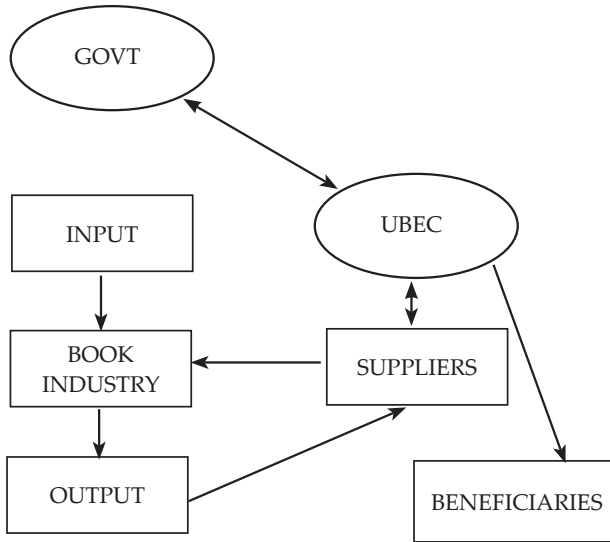
The Model of Disconnection depicts government's systemic insensitivity to industrial inputs in the book industry, revealing clearly that key economic variable that plays determinant role in the output cost and accessibility of literacy materials to users are not considered in the planning and implementation of literacy policy in the country, whereas there is absolute dependence of the book industry on the input variables.

The simple effect of this is exorbitant cost of reputable publishing and gross disempowerment of local authors whose manuscripts are rotting in waste, and the larger proportion of parents who are unable to afford textbooks for their children. To meet their literacy obligations to the nation, most authors unavoidably resort to

huge bank loans, even in the face of economic disempowerment that hinders the book market.

Figure 1: MODEL OF DISCONNECTION between the book industry and the UBE implementation *

*Source: Author



Outwardly, the government holds conferences and stakeholders meetings with book publishers, conduct applied researches and commission book writing and publishing to overshadow the reality of literacy policy implementation in the country. In reality, as the model also tries to explain, the book industry is treated strictly as a publisher who produces/ print literacy materials when so demanded by government-approved procurement/ supply contractors. No sustainable effort is made to integrate the book industry, being predominantly private sector-run, in literacy implementation by way of strategic policy and industrial interventions that will eliminate industrial input barriers, and make book publishing and buying affordable to authors and parents. If one has ever happened, it is how to make them funding partners, as Abani (2003: 5) argues: “In Nigeria, the private sector’s involvement has tended to focus on its role in contributing finances”. This is a key point of disconnect between the book industry system and literacy policy implementation in Nigeria, which naturally contradicts the essence of children literacy development as enunciated in the 2015 EFA goals. One might want to argue however that if industrial inputs are cheapened, there are chances that all kinds of rubbish will begin to emerge from the industries. Again, this is where a functional book policy is required to regulate the industry. But unfortunately, there is no book policy in Nigeria, as the next evidence elaborates.

2. Lack of Functional Book Policy

Fundamentally, literacy is the ability of the individual or people to read and write for knowledge acquisition and self development. This inextricably makes book central

in literacy development. However, another revealing contradiction in the pursuit of literacy in Nigeria is the lack of book policy. On April 22 2008, at the World Book and Copyright Day in Lagos, the Federal Government was reported as saying that a National Book Policy for Nigeria was going to be ready soon (*ThisDay* 2008). Up till now, Nigeria has no functional book policy. One may want to ask if there had been no efforts at putting up a book policy or even a book development commission in view of the series of book events that spans over two decades. According to Ike (2004: 3),

During the year 2000, the Federal Ministry of education announced the establishment of a National Book Council and actually convened the inaugural meeting of the Council in Abuja on 15 September 2000. The Council has not functioned since [then]. The Nigerian Book Foundation, which began to operate in 1993 as a non-profit, non-governmental organization, has tried to fill the gap as a national book development organization, bringing together stakeholders in the book sector to adopt a holistic approach to national book development. Drastically reduced sources of funding since early 2001 have, however, hampered its effectiveness.

While this evidence goes further to confirm the disconnection between the book industry system and literacy policy implementation in Nigeria, it also offers a back-up account of the effect of poor implementation strategy in the country's inability to meet the 2015 global targets on children literacy development.

3. Lack of tax Incentives to Book Publishers

Closely related to high cost of publishing materials is the lack of sustainable efforts by the government to give tax incentives to the book industry. Such policy is capable of lowering production costs, with a corollary of the book industry making positive and enduring impact on literacy development in the country. Rather, what the country has been witnessing since the 1980s is series of unproductive task forces, study groups and committees set up to make recommendations on the various facets of book production and distribution etc. Some of these tasks forces as Ike (2004:1) outlines include the 1983 Nigerian Congress on Books; the 1984 Task Force on Scarcity of Books and Stationery; 1987 Panel on Book Policy for Nigeria; 1989 ODA/World Bank Book Sector Study; 1990 National Council on Education Committee Report on Rationalization of Textbooks in primary and Secondary Schools; 1990 British Council – sponsored Conference to Debate the Book Sector Study; August-September 1990 Ministerial Committee on Provision of Books to Schools and Colleges; August 1993 Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council Review Workshop on Preferred Recommendations for Solving the problems of the Nigerian Book Industry and Formation of Implementation Strategies; April 1994 Conference on Book Development organised by the Nigerian Book Foundation on the Theme “Making Books Readily and Affordable”; 2008 World Book and Copyright day etc. Ike (2004) observes that none of this catalogue of committees, intelligent groups and task forces, neither has there been any one since 2008, could stop book famine in Nigeria.

4. Funding Disaster: Education as not Nigeria’s Priority

The first problem cited by the Federal Government of Nigeria for its anticipated failure in the 2015 EFA goals is lack of funds. Funding has quite often been deceptively cited and erroneously perceived as such, to justify failures in Nigeria. There are indeed many African countries belonging to the low-income category, but Nigeria is not one of them. Besides, substantial foreign aids, both in money and intellectual resources, come in support of most of the global development programmes and goals. For example the World Bank, among others, is a key partner in the funding of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria. Though foreign aids have been criticised as instrument of dependency, the problem in Nigeria is not availability of funds; it is how the monies meant for various development purposes are disbursed and whether they are actually used for the purposes they are meant, and to what extent is this commitment.

In addition to the question of usage of funds, there is the fact that education has never been Nigeria’s priority. This fact is evident in strategically and consistently low budgetary allocations to the education sector. The Nigerian education budget, since independence has been fluctuating between 1-3-9-17.59 percent of entire budgetary allocations up till 2002 as available data shows (Ajetomobi & Ayanwale 2005: 7; Dike 2002). Whereas the United Nations benchmark is 26 percent of total budgetary allocation to education, never has there been anytime till this moment that the education sector enjoyed up to 18 percent of total budgetary allocation in Nigeria. Rather there has continued to be downward fluctuation on budgetary allocation to education in the country. Based on accessible data, the following table highlights government spending on education in Nigeria (Table 1).

Table 1: Federal government budgetary allocation and spending on education in Nigeria¹

Budgetary Allocation		Spending on Education (%GNP)*	
Year	(%)		
1995	7.2	Angola	4.9
1996	12.32	Cote d’Ivoire	5
1997	17.59	Ghana	4.4
1998	10.27	Kenya	6.5
1999	11.12	Malawi	5.4
2000	8.36	Mozambique	4.1
2001	7.00	Nigeria	0.76
		South Africa	7.9

*Spending on Education compared with some other African countries as at 2002.

Again it is important to note that Nigeria’s education budget has remained below 10 percent since 2001. Quite often, the people blame British colonialism and imperialism for the woes of Nigeria’s economy, but when this situation is compared

¹ Source: Dike, 2002, www.afbis.com/analysis/education10204234737.htm. Tabulated by author

with that of Malaysia, which has common colonial experience with Nigeria, the evidences of internally generated poor performances becomes more glaring.

The 2008 budget speech of the Malaysian Prime Minister has it that RM30 billion was allocated to education (www.readycompanies.com). This was an upward review from RM29 billion, approximately 21.5 percent of the entire budget (RM134.7b) allocated to education in 2006 (Ming et al. 2005) The Nigeria total disclosed revenue is currently put at 10.49 billion US Dollars, amounting to slightly over RM36 billion. With this fact, it is clear that RM30 billion allocated to education alone is almost the entire Nigeria revenue in a fiscal year. It is not how much richer Malaysia is than Nigeria. Rather, the allocation to education is evident of the priority accorded to sector by the Malaysian government. Till today Nigeria has continued to witness downward fluctuation in budgetary allocation to education, making it even more difficult to meet the 2015 EFA goals in the country.

5. Socio-Demographic Influences

Poverty, unemployment and population explosion inter alia, including lack of Planned Parenthood are a group of unsettled socio-demographic influences that have continued to cripple literacy development in Nigeria. The MDG Monitor 2010 reported that “in sub-Saharan Africa, school fees consume nearly a quarter of a poor family’s income, paying not only for tuition, but also indirect fees such as Parent-Teacher Association and community contributions, textbook fees [emphasis mine], compulsory uniforms and other charges”. According to this report, African countries like Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda, whose national income falls quite below that of Nigeria, have thought it wise to eliminate school fees in order to meet the EFA goals. This policy received positive response from the local populations in terms of school enrolment. It was noted for example that in Ghana public school enrolment in the most deprived districts and nationwide soared from 4.2 million to 5.4 million between 2004 and 2005. In Kenya, enrolment of primary school children increased dramatically with 1.2 million extra children in school in 2003 alone; by 2004, the number had climbed to 7.2 million, of which 84 percent were of primary school age (see www.mdgmonitor.org). Although the sharp increase in school enrolment occasioned by the elimination of school fees in these countries was observed to have come with increased pressure on facilities, the policy is capable of addressing the widespread abuse of children in Nigeria resulting largely from parents’ inability to afford the consistently rising cost of qualitative basic education in the country.

Current statistics shows that 70 percent of Nigerians live below poverty line (CIA 2010), meaning that over 100 million of an estimated 154,729,000 million Nigerians live in absolute poverty. This poverty profile is sustained till today with endemic corruption that resulted in extremely poor remuneration of school teachers, whose meagre salaries are often withheld for the larger part of the year in unidentifiable fixed deposit accounts to generate interest for individuals. The categories of parents and beneficiaries most emphasised in the EFA targets are the most disempowered in the Nigerian literacy implementation processes.

Current unemployment rate in Nigeria is put at 4.9 percent while annual population growth rate is 1.999 percent 2009 estimate (CIA 2010). Only 47.33 million,

representing 30.6 percent of an estimated 154,729,000 population constitute the Nigerian work force. This means that over 60 percent of the Nigerian population falls under the dependent population category. A huge proportion of the working population is self-employed business men/women, traders and artisans etc. The traders and artisans constitute the higher majority of the self-employed, and they are mainly women and school age children. Because of pervasive poverty, most of the children drop out of school. Those who are able to continue have to be engaged in some form of trade to generate money for their own school fees and feeding for themselves, their younger ones and the parents. This category of children cannot afford private schools, and are practically unable to buy textbooks as most public schools are not well equipped with library. Thus, only a few of the Nigerian children successfully complete good quality basic education. Majority ends with poor quality basic education while a significant others drop out—especially those from the absolutely poor and/or Unplanned Parenthood background. Difficulties in securing employment after school have equally been discouraging many poor parents from sending their children to schools and making it even more difficult for Nigeria to realise children literacy development goals. This is especially common in eastern part of the country, where high premium is placed on material acquisitions.

Unplanned Parenthood is endemic in northern Nigeria, where the culture of *Almajarinci*—the practice of “begging to survive”² among school age children is legitimised. The *Almajirais*—illiterate school age children who practice *Almajarinci*—are found on the streets individually or in groups with plates on their hands, everywhere around northern Nigeria begging for food. They beg to survive and they most often sleep wherever the night catches up with them. There are no accessible statistical information on the *Almajirais*, evidences on the streets are however clear that this category of deprived children constitute a significant proportion of the overall children population in northern Nigeria.

Although the *Almajirais* in essence acquires Quranic literacy, since national development emphasises western education *Almajarinci* becomes a major set back in children literacy development in Nigeria. While this fact exists, there really are no clear-cut commitments to addressing the scourge of *Almajarinci* and other fundamental socio-demographic set back on Nigeria’s efforts towards Education for All in 2015. These, together with the systemic disconnect between the literacy industry and policy strategies sums up to confirm that Nigeria will not be able to meet the EFA 2015 targets.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper started with the objective of assessing the linkage between Nigeria’s anticipated inability to meet the EFA 2015 goals and her policy implementation strategies in relation to her literacy industry and socio-demographics. The aim is to confirm and establish the principal factors responsible for the country’s inability to meet the 2015 global literacy development goals. The assessment is premised on the

² “Begging to survive” is the contemporary usage and practice of *Almajarinci* in Northern Nigeria. The concept originally refer to a system of Islamic education where children are sent by parents to organised schools far from their homes to seek Quranic literacy and education in order to instill discipline and fear of God, and make them useful members of the society.

increasing concern for universal literacy, which grew out of the 1990 World Education Conference in Jomtien and the 2000 Dakar Education Forum. The principal thesis of the paper is that Nigeria will not meet the 2015 EFA targets, and that the failure is significantly consequent upon poor policy implementation strategy in relation to her literacy industry and socio-demographic facts.

Critical reviews and situation analysis of the policies and institutional frameworks for the implementation of literacy in Nigeria was conducted, and the evidences found reaffirms the thesis of this paper. Thus, the paper concludes that the Nigeria will not meet the EFA 2015 target, and might continue indefinitely to renege on her undertakings in global literacy development unless drastic measures are taken to tackle the issues of policy implementation strategies and the domestic underpinning socio-demographic influences.

It is agreed in wisdom that a builder must first clear his field of weeds before laying the foundation, for the fear that no building can be erected successfully on unclear vegetation. In the light of this wisdom, the following measures are recommended for stakeholders and policy makers to reinvigorate Nigeria's participation in global drive towards Education for All beyond 2015.

- *Full absorption of the literacy industry into literacy policy strategies*, supported with cut-down measures on costs of publishing to empower local authors whose manuscripts are lying fallow and to improve readership culture, which itself, is tied to affordability rate of literacy materials. This way, efforts are also made to eliminate production input barriers through strategic policy and industrial interventions that will cheapen output costs of especially basic education and literacy resources.
- *Increased budgetary support for education*. Effort must be stepped up by the Nigerian government to operate progressively from, at least, 20 percent to possibly beyond the United Nations' benchmark of 26 percent of total budgetary allocation to education. This should be supported with abolition of school fees the same way some other poorer African countries identified earlier have done. Such intervention should be viewed as social responsibility that cuts across public and private schools offering basic education in the country.
- *A comprehensive and harmonised basic education curriculum*, with functional monitoring system that ensures high quality delivery at primary and secondary school levels. At present, Nigeria is operating no less than five curricula for basic education. There is the National Curriculum; The Education Resource Centre Curriculum; The Federal Curriculum; The West African Examination Council Curriculum and the National Examination Council Curriculum. These curricula are competing for attention, with the representatives of each body always on visitation to the schools to ensure that its own curriculum is applied. All of the curricula are planned around the same thing—basic education, but with wide variation in structure, subjects and topics prioritisation, including depth of treatment of topics etc. This makes the task of literacy delivery even more complex and difficult.
- *Intensify community-based literacy programme* that takes literacy to the doorsteps of not only the Nomads, but also the huge populations of children

of rural dwellers who constitute over 70 percent of Nigeria's population. This strategy should be supported with employment creation and sustained campaign on Planned Parenthood to eradicate abuse of children and improve on the literate proportion of children from poor background.

- *A comprehensive and functional book policy* will also help to regulate the activities of the industry, which is currently so loose, as Ike (2004) observes, that anyone who is able to erect a tent can be granted publishing license. This recommendation is linked to integration of the book industry system in literacy policy planning and implementation in Nigeria.

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